'CORPORATE POLICE STORIES' — A RESEARCH NOTE ON THE IMPACT AND THE CAPABILITIES OF POLICE HISTORY ON POLICING, POLICE TRAINING AND COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: Over the last few years, scientific works and discourses about organisational uses of history have increased. Most of them refer to private sector organisations and their benefits from using their past. Making use of an organisation's history has already been widely acknowledged as an important means for a company's identity formation and its image. Regarding the company's internal relations, an organisational identity based on this form of history management holds potential for recognition, the implementation of values and the strengthened loyalty of employees. Concerning external relations, the properly structured management of history can result in recognisable and distinguishable image formation, leading to advantages in the competition for resources with other companies and in defining the work area. For the stakeholders, it provides a stable point of orientation among the enormous number of apparently identical organisations. In contrast to this, governmental organisations — especially those dealing with security tasks — do not seem to be in need of such measures due to their stable institutional background. However, there are still some approaches engaging in processing the organisational past of police organisations. Primarily based on empirical material from Germany (e.g. documents, websites, artefacts), this article presents first findings and assumptions on why this is being done and what outcomes the uses of the past provide for the external and internal communication processes of police organisations.

Keywords: police; organisation; history; identity; image.

WHY AND HOW 'HISTORY MATTERS' IN ORGANISATIONS

'History matters' (Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014, p. 250) not only in historical sciences, but also in organisational research and theory and, last but not least, in practice. In recent years, uses of the past have become an important topic in organisation studies (Bucheli and Wadhwani, 2013; Kipping and Üsdiken, 2014). Related literature points out, for example, that history is helpful for understanding organisations, organisational culture and cultural differences, and organisational decisions, developments or pathways, as have several other studies (e.g. Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014; Brunninge, 2009; Sydow, Schreyögg and Koch, 2009; Schein, 2003; Hofstede, 2001). Some studies emphasise particularly the effects of organisational uses of the past on organisations' communication processes with different stakeholders in terms of 'storytelling', 'narratives' and 'corporate stories' (e.g. Foster, Suddaby, Minkus and Wiebe, 2011; Gill, 2011) and discuss certain impacts on image and identity formation (e.g. Anteby and Molnár, 2012; Gioia, Schultz and Corley 2000).

The past as a means of history is currently not only dealt with for the sake of (scientific) knowledge, and thus as an end in itself, but also with the objective of being used intentionally by organisations for added value to be further determined in each case (Kühberger and Pudlat, 2012). In this process, external stakeholders (customers, cooperation partners or an — undefined — general public) are potential addressees, as well as the organisations' employees. Thus, history becomes a meaningful source of communication regarding both external and internal relations (Burmann and Zeplin, 2006;

Schug, 2003, p. 21), an aspect that has rarely been dealt with so far in scientific research (Bauer and Windischbauer, 2012, p. 88; Buß, 2007).

In some organisational research, it is highlighted that using an organisation's history for its image construction (directed at external parties), as well as its identity formation (directed at internal parties), is a recent trend, mostly observed in organisations in the private sector (Bühler and Düring, 2008, p. 47). It is stated that in the time of an increasingly complex and dynamic society (due to globalisation, informatisation, mediatisation, etc.), the public's need for a cultural identity and its conservation, stability and the recognition of values, as well as guidance, is constantly growing stronger. Organisations acknowledging this development meet those needs, which are also addressed by their stakeholders, by forming a history-based organisational profile and a complementary identity. Traditions, historical symbols and regional references make an important contribution to this process (Buß, 2007, pp. 72-73), since 'traditions become the place of safety, controllability in a diffuse, big globe of emotions' (Buß, 2007, p. 72; Schütte-Bestek, 2015b, pp. 116-117). Cultures of memory are one result of this.

Therefore, usage of one's own past fulfils two important functions for organisations. On the one hand it fulfils an associative function, as an organisation displays its unique image by linking itself to its history, identity and values. This creates a so-called recognition value for the organisation, through which it can take its place in collective memory. By forming a history-based identity and mediating its own set of values, employees in particular become more closely committed to the organisation. On the other hand, making use of its own past fulfils a distinguishing function for an organisation, as the differences from other organisations are based on the distinctive and specific organisational histories. The role, function, meaning, brand and uniqueness of an organisation are established from its history and tradition. Thus, if an organisation manages to include an individual history in its self-representation, it is able to install a steady public image of itself and distinguishes itself at the same time from similar organisations. This provides advantages in the competition for attention, considering customer loyalty, recruiting, information, financial support or other resources the organisation requires from its environment (Buß, 2007, pp. 73-74; Schütte-Bestek, 2015b, pp. 116-117).

While this 'history marketing' is perceived as essential for the continuing existence of companies in the private sector, it seems that public organisations are not as much in need of dealing with their past. This might be partially due to their stable institutional background. Nevertheless, there are public organisations, particularly governmental organisations, that are gradually starting to process their own past. Particularly in the field of security, governmental authorities and organisations concerned with security tasks — as it is the case in Germany — are opening up to these forms of research projects (e.g. Baumann, Reinke, Stephan and Wagner 2011; Bundeskriminalamt, 2011; Bundeskriminalamt, 2008; Conze, Frei, Hayes and Zimmermann, 2010).

As can be seen in our first (empirical) overview, police organisations (POs) in Europe are engaging, and have been doing so for some time already, in different approaches relating to the handling of their past. Hence, a vast number of police museums (re-)opened after World War II in Europe, displaying the histories of individual POs in regard to societal as well as regional developments at that time. Furthermore, the organisational past has also been used in publications such as chronicles (e.g. Präsidium der Bayerischen Bereitschaftspolizei, 2011) or magazines for the members of POs (Dölling, Gössel and Waltoś, 1998; Linssen and Pfeiffer, 2009; Prange, 2010; Pudlat, 2012; Schweer, 2007). We assume that these approaches can be seen as an integral part of internal and external POs' communication or as a kind of 'corporate story', which portrays the individual organisation with its values, development and tasks (Buß, 2007, p. 82; Mawby, 2002). These are essential requirements supporting external stakeholders in their decisions regarding determining interactions with a PO (Buß, 2007, p. 82). These approaches also function as groundwork for making sense of and legitimating police work (Sillince and Brown, 2009). Processing an organisation's own past also seems to be important for internal relations, as for example the results from a research project regarding the changing of the German Bundesgrenzschutz (Federal Border Guard) into the Bundespolizei (Federal Police) indicate (Schütte-Bestek, 2015a).

However, in research on (history-based) identity formation and image construction, POs for the most part remain disregarded (Mawby, 2014). Thus, a research gap in the field of police and

organisational research can be found concerning questions such as to what extent POs use their past internally and externally and whether it is a constituting element of police culture (Behr, 2006; Behr, 2008; Loader and Mulcahy, 2003). As this field of research still has to be further explored and spread, our research project focuses on the uses of the past of police organisations in Europe (UPPE) and aims to answer the questions of how and why POs in Europe use their pasts in their public relations strategies, policing strategies and police training and what strategic and tactical capabilities can be identified within policing, police communication and training contexts. Therefore, we will be using qualitative methods to analyse empirical data, for example documents like magazines for members of the organisations or press releases, websites and artefacts (police museums) that were collected in the first instance in German POs. As a second step we will analyse other selected European POs. Due to financial resources and language skills this will happen especially for Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The present paper, in terms of a research note, is an outcome of the first phase of the aforementioned research project. The aim is to present the first findings and assumptions drawn from an explorative and inductive overview of the collected empirical data and to deduce some preliminary conclusions and implications for future research.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK, FIRST FINDINGS AND ASSUMPTIONS

We define the past generally as something that happened before the present time — for example events, incidents, organisational and individual actions — and is used in form of a narration (history) to interpret and understand contemporary aspects. Against this background, history is already part of the internal and external communication processes of POs all over Europe as far as our first findings are concerned. Police history can be found to be communicated in

police museums and historical police collections in nearly every EU Member State. The history and organisational or individual stories of German POs — on which we focus in this article — are also an integral part of several elements: magazines for members of the POs ([1]), image brochures (e.g. *Polizeiakademie Niedersachsen*, 2009), the websites of different police forces, anniversary events and jubilee publications (e.g. *Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin*, 2011), as well as informal talks and stories (e.g. 'adventure stories' (Behr, 2008, p. 143)) embedded in police training and everyday work. All of these examples are evidence for actual uses of the past within the POs' internal and external public relations — whether intended or unintended, or even though there are no hints that specific communication strategies relating to history exist.

That is why we initially work with documents (e.g. brochures, chronicles), the homepages of POs and artefacts (e.g. police museums) as outcomes of POs' communication processes that contain organisational history or stories. At first we collected them from German POs. Then, as noted previously, we started the analysis with an explorative and also inductive overview, according to the different sources. We were therefore able to complement our theoretical (deductive) categories (e.g. identity, image) with inductive categories. Taking our different sources into account we used artefact analysis (Froschauer 2009) and content analysis (Mayring 2010) in order to explore additional important categories of uses of the past in POs from the empirical material and to complete our category system for another systematic analysis. In this article we would like to present the preliminary results and assumptions from our previous research steps.

Combining the aforementioned organisations' theoretical aspects and our first findings we argue that POs' histories are necessary resources in their communication processes as a basis that could be used flexibly to adequately address different and sometimes conflicting demands from their internal (members) and external (e.g. public, media, political actors, other POs at national and international levels) stakeholders.

In a kind of sustainable communication, police forces try to present their development as a

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([1]) Some examples: *Bundespolizei kompakt*, a magazine for members of the Federal Police; *Streife*, a magazine of the North Rhine-Westphalia police; the *Polizei Journal* of the Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania police

directed, 'linear process' from the past to the present time, 'based on tradition, experience and innovation' (Ackermann, 2012, p. 70). With regard to this, a specific German issue is the topic of National Socialism (²). In order to underline the democratisation of the POs and their members after World War II, the period between 1933 and 1945 is often a part of exhibitions in police museums (e.g. in Berlin and Hamburg), as well as being represented in image brochures. As one example of this, the Lower Saxony police state that it was important to reinstall people and their dignity as a measuring stick for policing after the 'inhuman system of National Socialism'. The result is the successful model of a *Bürgerpolizei* (citizens' police) (*Polizeiakademie Niedersachsen*, 2009, p. 17). The Berlin police, as another example, link the history of the city with their own: 'Berlin has so often been subject to fundamental change that the face of Berlin has changed more than any other of the world's major cities. As we say: […] Berlin is not, Berlin will be!' (*Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin*, 2013, p. 44), referring to the world and the city changing at a fast pace, which means a professionalised police is a necessary part of society. Professionalism here means the ability to change processes, technologies, values, attitudes and aims deliberately in that context. This is similar to PR in the private sector: the importance of 'change in the strategic planning and the communication' is increasing (Ackermann, 2012, p. 70; Deekeling, 2009).

Another trend can be identified within this means of communication for police and policing: 'glocalisation'. In a globalised, dynamic world, people ask for local anchor points. As the CEPOL conference in 2015 showed, there are specific local cultures used as frameworks for policing as well as police studies. On the one hand this underlines the importance of historical knowledge for the understanding of national or local policing cultures. On the other hand an explanation for exhibition concepts in police museums all over the world can be found. Criminal cases, some of which have been spectacular, are an integral part of the exhibition and, for the most part, there are links to regional police work. Local police history and policing issues are covered there. However, as already mentioned, this suggests a positive,

linear process, as can be seen in a documentary film about special police forces (SEK-Einsatz 2015). German police focus on the 1972 incident when the Olympic Games in Munich came under attack and the lack of special weapons, tactics, snipers and well-trained police officers led to many Israeli sportsmen being killed. As a result, all police authorities put in place special forces units (e.g. Bundespolizeimuseum), the best-known of those being the GSG 9. However, thematising failure is not usually part of police PR strategies. It is mainly possible due to another famous incident, operation 'Feuerzauber'. In 1977, the GSG 9 became well known for successfully fighting terrorism by rescuing the hostages of a hijacked German aeroplane called *Landshut* in Mogadishu. The myth of Mogadishu and the GSG 9 was born and, ever since, police authorities have been able to communicate their ability to reform police strategies and tactics in order to fight serious crime and terrorism. However, there is mostly a lack of communication about misconduct and decisions between local police operations. Assuming POs should bear corporate historical responsibility (CHR) as part of corporate social responsibility, it is necessary to use history in a reasonable way for external and internal communication. This includes talking about failures and scandals in order to enhance trust and integrity as fundamental parts of policing. CHR is a voluntary contribution (Ackermann, 2012, p. 74) and 'hinges on the recognition of the past as a moral issue and on the organisation's ability to create historical accountability, take responsibility, make public acknowledgements, and remember its past. It further illustrates that CHR creates sustainable policies that can strengthen corporate citizenship and serve as a means of (re-)legitimation' (Jannsen, 2013).

However, it must be noted that the use of police history often does not really intend a kind of accounting for the past (³). Creating the image of a modern organisation is a more important motive. Primarily, it is the capacity for communication in general that compels POs to mention history and to tell their stories. It enables the POs to get in touch with citizens in order to fulfil the classic duties of policing, like crime prevention. The Hamburg police, for example, combine

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(²) One example is the project 'Die Polizei im NS-Staat' (2008-2011) under the leadership of Wolfgang Schulte (Deutsche Hochschule der Polizei) and Detlef Graf von Schwerin (formerly Fachhochschule der Polizei des Landes Brandenburg), which led to the exhibition 'Ordnung und Vernichtung. Die Polizei im NS-Staat' shown in the Deutsches Historisches Museum from April to August 2011

(³) An exception is the aforementioned project 'Die Polizei im NS-Staat'.

their exhibition within the police museum with policing matters by providing information and hints on how to prevent burglary, pickpocketing, cybercrime and stalking. Additionally, they provide instructions on traffic safety. The same can be noticed when POs are celebrating jubilees. When the mounted police of Hannover celebrated their 200th anniversary in 2015, for example, the citizens were invited to the police premises. However, only parts of the event actually thematised the historical development. For the most part, people were able to see presentations about contemporary police work, equipment and cars. Catering was provided and there was a kids' play area. Therefore, it can be assumed that POs' histories function as 'catalytic convertors' that translate police and police work into socially comprehensible facts and images.

Hence, the presentations and exhibitions are often tied up with established images and clichés of police. Citizens can see 'action'-artefacts, like weapons, handcuffs, truncheons and uniforms. They can have a look at patrol cars, and techniques for self-defence and arresting people are demonstrated. This is not only in order to implement trust, but might also be an approach for the recruitment of young people to the organisation.

Beyond the abovementioned capabilities of uses of the past for external communication — for example with the public — organisational history and organisational stories are also important resources for the internal communication of POs. In this context, it could be seen as more than the chronology of an organisation (Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014). As we know from organisational theoretical literature, the use of history supports identification processes and the formation of an organisational identity for members of the organisation (Anteby and Molnár, 2012; Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000; Hansen, 2007; He and Brown, 2013; Mordhorst, 2014).

Results from interviews with police officers of the German Federal Police (formerly known as the Federal Border Guard), as an example, underline this. Some of the police officers interviewed highlighted links between the organisational history and identity and their identification with the organisation. Due to the unification of Germany and its consequences for the Federal Border Guard in terms of structural changes, new responsibilities (railway police competences,

aviation security) and finally the change of its name, they reported for example that from their point of view, the organisation has lost an important part of its identity (Schütte-Bestek, 2015a), which could be seen as a kind of 'identity threat' (Jacobs, Christe-Zeyse, Keegan and Pólos, 2008). It seems that some (particularly older) members are currently searching for a new organisational identity that links the past and the present police organisations. The interviewees mentioned their fear that the old times — particularly the old Federal Border Guard, with its image as an impressive, robust and effective police force and its success stories — might be forgotten in a few years' time, and they expressed their wish for more documentation, conservation and opportunities for reflection concerning the whole history of federal police in order to support identity and image formation (Schütte-Bestek, 2015b).

According to our first empirical results we have observed some organisational attempts to provide identification as well as identity-forming processes by integrating the organisational past into internal communication in a more formal way. For example, in the magazine of the German Federal Police (*Bundespolizei kompakt*) a new section was introduced in 2015 entitled '5 questions to …', in which single police officers from different departments tell their individual stories within the organisation. They report the different career stations, highlights and challenges of their work-life (*Bundespolizei kompakt*, 2015, Vol. 1-4). Other magazines of POs entail the history of certain police units, such as in the context of jubilees (e.g. *Bundespolizei kompakt*, 2015, Vol. 4), or explain how a certain PO has developed over the last 25 years (e.g. *Polizei Journal* of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania). These stories transfer long-existing values (e.g. solidarity, unity and team spirit), norms (policing ideals, mission statements) and traditions, and are therefore helpful for organisation members to be able to better understand their (current) organisation, organisational decisions and changes. Beside these communication media, some sections of police museums function as historical police collections of teaching aids that are used for the training of police. The official aim of this is to present police cadets with examples of real-life police work, policing methods and operating resources and how they evolved; the regional or local history of a PO and its relations with the public; actual cases; and several others (e.g. Polizeimuseum Hamburg, 2011). However,

as persons responsible explain, police cadets are actually just hustled through the historical collections without being given the opportunity to reflect on history, operations and critical events or to depict lessons learned from these. What this points to is that there is no mature didactical concept in handling the past within police training contexts.

From these observations, we work out the assumptions that using a POs past in terms of internal communication is an opportunity for linking together past, present and future of an organisation. At the same time, it is seen as a condition for (historical) sensemaking, since history transfers organisational traditions and meanings, institutional concepts as well as local specialities of POs, which are important for their members to form an organisational identity and which are necessary to understand 'their' organisation.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings and assumptions presented concerning the uses of the past in POs' internal and external communications are the first results, and refer only to German POs. Due to this fact our propositions are limited and must be further developed over the next several years. For now, it can be stated that POs already use their history for internal and external communication processes, but not as strategic or selective corporate storytelling, or rather story building. While police history and stories are a small part of police PR, they are used for the self-presentation of POs to different internal and external stakeholders. In these terms, police history seems to function as a 'catalytic convertor' that provides links between POs and other social actors as much as between POs and their members. This implies a high potential to promote, for example, legitimacy, trust and satisfaction (in terms of external relations), especially in the contemporary dynamic world with specific issues of globalisation as well as loyalty, solidarity, engagement and identification among organisation members.

This also entails a chance for the Europeanisation of local, regional and national police forces.

Persisting national cultures and laws may have an effect not only on local policing, but also on cross-border investigations and operations, as well as on handling global problems (e.g. refugees). EU agencies (e.g. CEPOL and Frontex) dedicate themselves to this challenge, as do common offices (e.g. Bureau Commun de Coopération Policière) and exchange programmes. As history shows, the need for this development is obvious. Since the 19th century law enforcement agencies and politics have responded to the cross-border movement of criminals in terms of cooperation frameworks, conferences, agreements and search publications (Aden, 1998). But there are different cultures, languages, structures and work mentalities. That is why it is helpful and necessary to understand the partners in fighting crime. Referring to the European area of freedom, security and justice and the EU's efforts to enhance the cooperation of police bodies, local and national identities (referring to community policing) and a European identity (referring to cross-border cooperation) should be combined. In this context, history provides associative grounds for crosslinking, networking and exchange. It can be assumed that police stories are able to boost a European police spirit — they just have to be told (selectively). There are enough tales about joint operations and missions (e.g. by Frontex), about policing football championships or Olympic Games, about combat team conferences and other joint training scenarios and, last but not least, about CEPOL conferences. Basically, there is the opportunity to write European corporate police stories.

Nevertheless, we assume from our findings that these uses of the past have thus far been a less regulated and professionalised part of police communication. 'Corporate police stories' indeed already exist as 'narrations from within the organisation relating to its people, practices, policies and visions' (Gill, 2011, p. 1). However, they do not seem to be used in a strategic and reflexive manner as for-profit organisations would use them, for example in a target group-specific direction. Furthermore, there might be unintended effects that have to be further explored.

In conclusion, it can also be stated that no matter whether the past is used in a local, national or European perspective, it should reasonably comply with the scope of CHR. Therefore, self-presentation with the help of the past should

be an integral part of police PR strategies and guidelines. Good and bad times are equally part of the police history, as are success and failure in operations. Both sides should be mentioned and reflected, because reappraisal of and accounting for the past counts more than an incident in itself when it comes to establishing trust in the organisation. To support such a kind of reasonable use of past, collaborations between police (policing, training) and research (organisational studies, didactics of history, etc.) are recommended.

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Museum of the [German] Federal Police, Lübeck, analysed in September 2015. Website: unfortunately the website was renewed/updated in the middle of October. The new website does not contain a tab for the museum yet.